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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/S, AF/FO

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SUBJECT: CONSULTATIONS WITH MWANAWASA ON NEXT STEPS

REF: LUANDA 331

Classified By: Ambassador Carmen Martinez for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. In a meeting with President Mwanawasa, A/S Frazer and NSC Senior Director Pittman called upon the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to increase its pressure on President Mugabe, offer its protection to Tsvangirai, and send a delegation of senior statesmen to

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Harare. They drew attention to gross instances of human rights abuse in Zimbabwe, and emphasized the need for immediate action. President Mwanawasa said that although SADC sanctions against President Mugabe would be the most effective tool, this solution would not be supported by many of his SADC counterparts. He said he was prepared to send a committee of SADC leaders to entreat Mugabe, as well as a delegation of former heads of state. He indicated strong support for a government of national unity, which he said might be the only way forward. End Summary.

¶2. (C) On April 26, A/S Frazer and NSC Senior Director Pittman discussed the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe with President Mwanawasa, along with Foreign Minister Pande, Presidential Minister Cecil Holmes, and other senior advisors. A/S Frazer acknowledged President Mwanawasa's positive role in addressing issues in Zimbabwe through his position as SADC Chair and conveyed a letter from President Bush expressing appreciation for the Zambian President's leadership. A/S Frazer shared USG concerns about the delay in releasing election results and the escalating violence. She also suggested that the environment in Zimbabwe no longer provides for free and fair elections, in case of a run-off.

¶3. (C) President Mwanawasa said that events in Zimbabwe show "extreme disregard for the rule of law and ... are an embarrassment to the region." President Mwanawasa pointed to the violation of SADC election protocols, and said there is no excuse for delays in releasing the election results. Referring to the SADC emergency summit on April 12 in Lusaka, and a subsequent heads of state summit on development in Mauritius on April 19, President Mwanawasa said that he had hoped that after these "lively" meetings, "the dissent that was expressed by SADC countries would send a message" to President Mugabe. President Mwanawasa pointed to SADC sanctions--and suspension of SADC membership--as the ideal instrument to pressure Mugabe to step down, but said that this initiative was unlikely to be supported by a majority of SADC member states. He expressed regret that some SADC leaders continue to feel sympathetic to Mugabe.

¶4. (C) Echoing A/S Frazer's remarks and referring to the vote re-counts and tabulations, President Mwanawasa said "I am not so sure how credible the results will be, once they are released." In the event of a run-off, he said that an

environment probably does not exist for free and fair elections. He conveyed reports of electoral abuse, intimidation, and violence. He opined that many Zimbabweans would not come out to vote in a run-off, or would not vote according to their conscience.

¶15. (C) Regarding President Mbeki's role as SADC mediator on Zimbabwe, President Mwanawasa related a recent conversation in which President Mbeki claimed that he had been misunderstood when he said that Zimbabwe was not in a crisis. President Mwanawasa said that he was prepared to give the South African President the benefit of the doubt, particularly as President Mbeki had played a useful role in ensuring, originally, the peaceful conduct of Zimbabwe's national elections. He suggested, however, that President Mbeki's effectiveness may be limited now that the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) had lost confidence in him.

¶16. (C) President Mwanawasa shared details about his discussions with Tsvangirai during the Zimbabwe opposition leader's visit to Lusaka. He said that Tsvangirai was open to a government of national unity, particularly as Tsvangirai believes that he has won the national elections, but not with a majority of votes. Tsvangirai, he said, thought this could be a way forward. According to President Mwanawasa, Zimbabwe's Health Minister, who attended a SADC ministerial in Lusaka this week, told him that ZANU-PF is open to the possibility of a government of national unity and President Mwanawasa "should not be surprised if (he is) invited to discuss this possibility."

¶17. (C) President Mwanawasa said he intends to discuss with President Dos Santos the possibility of sending a committee of SADC presidents to talk to President Mugabe and Zimbabwean opposition leaders. He also called for a delegation comprised of former heads of state--such as Kaunda of Zambia,

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Nujoma of Namibia, and Chissano of Mozambique--to entreat the Zimbabwean leader. A/S Frazer agreed, saying that even if President Mbeki continues in his role, these former Presidents could play a constructive role. She projected that it would be difficult for President Mugabe to dismiss a mission of first generation African leaders.

¶18. (C) In response to President Mwanawasa's request for proposals on how to move forward, A/S Frazer answered that SADC should offer a security detail to Tsvangirai so that he can return to Zimbabwe without fearing for his life. She encouraged SADC leaders to communicate to Mugabe that no harm should befall Tsvangirai. She pointed to past practices in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo, where South Africa offered its protection to returning opposition leaders so that they could return safely. Such an act by President Mbeki, A/S Frazer added, could help restore relations with the MDC.

¶19. (C) A/S Frazer emphasized that any solution that precludes President Mugabe's stepping down is unacceptable. She recognized that an easy solution for SADC would be to do nothing. Such a solution, she said, would do injustice to the Zimbabwean people, who exercised courage during the March 29 elections. The responsibility now, she urged, rests with the international community, rather than the Zimbabwean people. She also noted that the USG would not support a solution that entails Mugabe holding on to power, in which case the USG would escalate its sanctions against Zimbabwe's leadership.

¶10. (C) NSC Director Pittman indicated USG interest in taking the issue forward at the United Nations, so that the international community could speak with one voice and in complement to SADC. Despite President Dos Santos's suggestions in a meeting on April 25 that a crisis would develop in Zimbabwe when the election results are finally announced, A/S Frazer pointed out that the crisis is already

underway, with serious reports of intimidation, electoral fraud, and human rights abuse: "The crisis is now. Now is the time to push hard."

¶11. (C) At the close of the meeting, Foreign Minister Pande confided that he had discussed the issue of the arms shipment to Zimbabwe with the Chinese diplomatic mission. The Chinese diplomats had told him that China is embarrassed and prepared to recall the vessel. In conclusion, President Mwanawasa said that he hoped recent events demonstrate "how far SADC will go" to bring peace to the region. He welcomed further dialogue on Zimbabwe, and promised to be in contact with A/S Frazer to exchange ideas on the best way forward. He also welcomed additional high-level USG visitors, including President Bush.

¶12. (C) Comment. It was encouraging to hear President Mwanawasa frame his statements about Zimbabwe in a human rights context and in a way that showed his awareness of the proliferation of human rights abuse in Zimbabwe. There seemed to be little doubt in his mind that Tsvangirai had won the elections. At one point, President Mwanawasa even mistakenly referred to the Zimbabwe opposition leader as "President Tsvangirai." His multiple solicitations for guidance on the best way forward was encouraging and pointed to his sincerity and commitment in finding a solution that will bring both peace and change to Zimbabwe.

MARTINEZ